

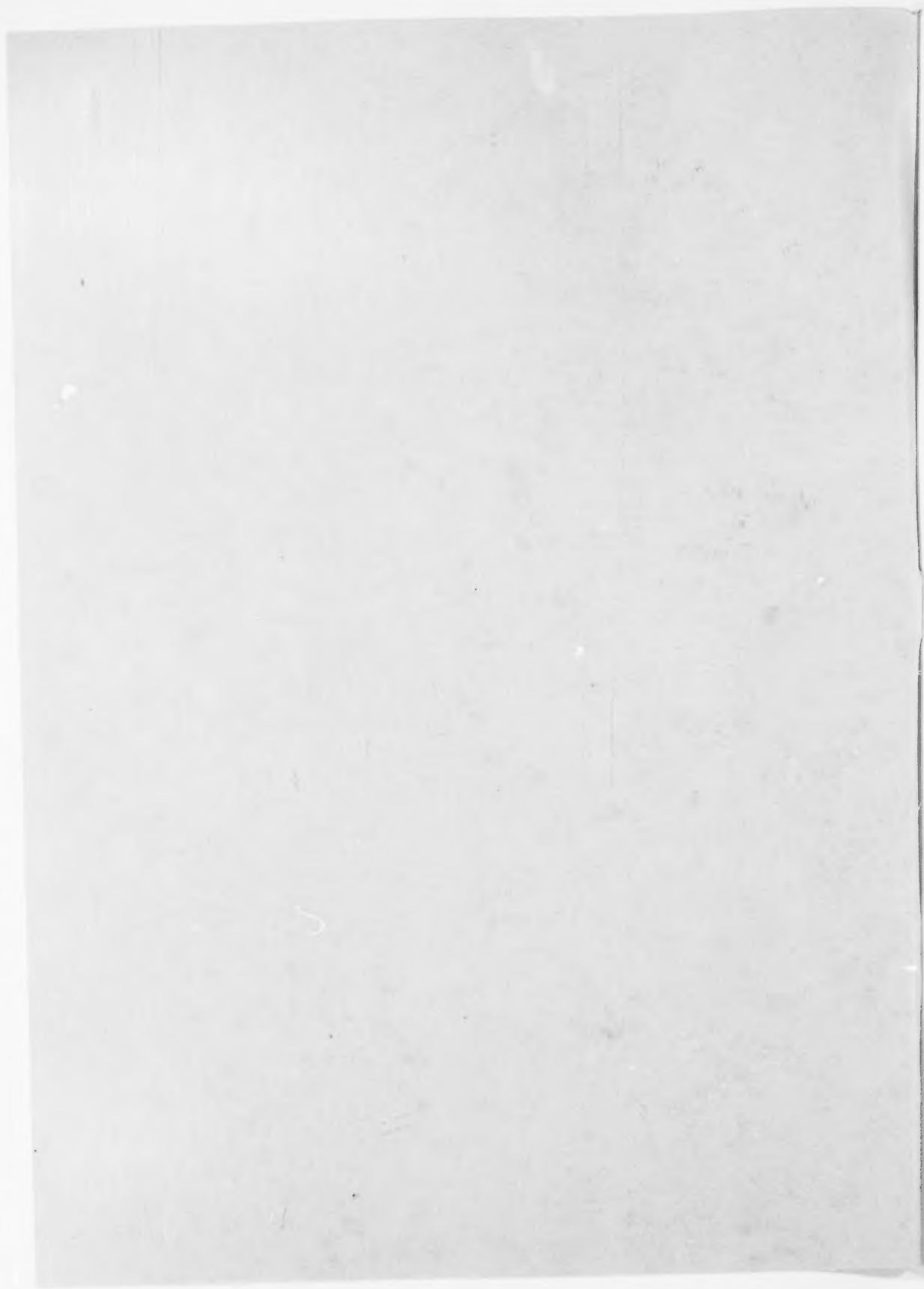


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RURAL PROGRESS is published to facilitate dissemination of information, exchange of experience in integrated rural development in African and to generate more informed interest in the concept amongst all concerned. For further information, please write to the Editor, Rural Progress, Economic Commission for Africa, P.O. Box 3001, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

REFLECTIONS ON THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON AGRARIAN REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (WCARRD), 1979 - 1989

Introduction

The fundamental question which should be raised is whether or not Africa has witnessed or has started moving towards the structural transformation of its rural sector as recommended ten years ago when WCARRD was held in Rome in 1979. If we were to undertake a detailed analysis of the present situation as a reflection of what has transpired in the field of Africa's development process during the past decade and more, one is tempted to suggest that more remains to be done to advance the worthy ideals and objectives initiated by FAO in Rome during WCARRD. In 1979 WCARRD took place against a background of profound changes in international economic relations following the so called "oil crisis" and more profoundly the set-backs witnessed in the two UN International Development Decades.

The current issue is, therefore, devoted to an assessment of the development prospects generated as a result of the implementation of the recommendations and conclusions of WCARRD, especially as these apply to the prevailing conditions of the rural sector in Africa.

It is widely acknowledged that Africa is a continent of vast untapped development potential. It is a continent, which, given the political will and determination as well as the concerted action of the International Community can extricate itself out of the serious underdevelopment in which it finds itself today.

Nature has been generous to Africa. The continent has enough resources to feed itself equitably and at the same time be a member of the ivy league of food donors rather than be obliged and ashamed to be an 'international basket case'. Let us recognize that the most basic need of any rural development programme is food self-sufficiency.

The continent's current socio-economic crisis in the post WCARRD-era, has obliged us to review its performance during 1979-1989 period. It is in the light of this growing concern that we present our review. If our review occasionally sounds too candid this is a result of the logics of our analysis rather than a deliberate desire to be unduly candid.

FAO, a specialized agency of the United Nations System, sponsored the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD). It is now ten years since WCARRD was held in Rome in July 1979. The tenth anniversary of WCARRD has already been celebrated. This issue will review the changes which have taken place in Africa following WCARRD.

Basis of the paper: The data for the Review was obtained from secondary sources, primarily from various publications of FAO, among others. FAO's instruments for follow-up of WCARRD included, among others, the preparation of country by country Progress Reports by governments on the Implementation of the Programme of Action of WCARRD. So far two Progress Reports have been prepared and consolidated by FAO. These reports have been a valuable source of information for this review.

Organization of the paper: The paper is organized in six sections. Section I gives a very brief background against which WCARRD was held. Section II covers the deliberations and issues raised at WCARRD itself. Section III notes the follow-up actions, which were taken by FAO, the sponsor organization in collaboration with the United Nations System. Section IV reviews some of the major actions which were taken by the member States of Africa to implement the Programme of Action of WCARRD. Section V tries to assess the impacts of WCARRD at country level especially on the life of the rural poor. The concluding Section attempts to offer some policy options for the next decade in the context of socio-economic and political realities of Africa today. The review excludes the international dimensions of WCARRD and only dwells on the "internal" factors of development. The international dimensions and implications of WCARRD are so vital and it is our intention to bring out a special issue on the subject in the future.

SECTION I

BACKGROUND OF THE WCARRD, 1979

Initial seeds of dependency: At the dawn of independence, Africa had the vision to assert its sovereignty and to become a free and prosperous region. There was optimism all around. This optimism has not yet died down.

During the colonial period, Africa was introduced and obliged to grow farm products, which it did not traditionally consume and imperceptibly developed a taste for products which it did not grow. The initial seeds of dependency and serious structural economic imbalance were thus sown during colonialism. Furthermore, the legacy of history rendered fourteen African countries landlocked, bequeathed thirteen with a land area less than 50,000 hectares each and has left twenty-three with a current population of less than five million. The economic viability of some of these states leaves much to be desired. They are, therefore, vulnerable to pull and pressure from outside, to say the least.

Vulnerability was further enhanced by several factors including the inadequacy of social and economic infrastructures, the dominance of exportable production and the overall neglect of the food sector of agriculture. Still worse after independence Africa had little or no management capacity since there was very limited manpower to assume the responsibilities of nation-building. This then was the background of Africa in the sixties.

National Priorities: A review of recent National Development Policies and Plans as well as statements made by the leaders of the newly independent states indicates that priorities were given to the following areas:

- (i) accumulation of capital;
- (ii) extraction of "surplus" from the economic base of the rural sector by a combination of price and fiscal policies;
- (iii) preferential treatment for export crop; and
- (iv) the expansion of the formal urban based sector of the national economy.

Erosion of accountability: Africa's ratio of self-sufficiency in food consequently started declining in the seventies. The early seventies also witnessed the beginning of the phase of "pervasive lack of democracy" in the continent.^{1/} This sad erosion in accountability together with inappropriate development policies further reinforced the vicious circle of underdevelopment.

World Land Reform Conference, 1966: The international community, being concerned with the possibility of deteriorating food self-sufficiency ratio and stagnating rural sector in Africa and elsewhere, organized the World Land Reform Conference (WLRC) in Rome in 1966 which emphasized structural reform programmes, besides others. But, the follow-up actions were inconsequential. The deterioration in the income levels of the rural poor became noticeable. Hence, in 1971 a Special Committee, led by former President of Columbia, was set up to assess the lessons of the First Development Decade in Agrarian Reform. The Committee met eleven Heads of State and other distinguished personalities. It then submitted an authoritative but brief report re-iterating the case for reform of agrarian structures. The follow-up actions again were marginal; such reforms required basic adjustments in the political economy, touching upon sensitive issues of power and privileges.

World Food Conference, 1974: One of the appalling consequences of this serious lag between what needs to be done and what was actually done was the risk of mass starvation, especially by the disadvantaged segment of the population in the Third World, including Africa, in the early seventies. The risk aroused the conscience of people around the world, which led to the organization of the World Food Conference (WFC) in 1974.

The WFC solemnly proclaimed its conviction that "every man, woman and child has the inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition in order to develop fully and maintain their physical and mental faculties". It resolved that "all Governments should accept the removal of the scourge of hunger and malnutrition, which at present afflicts many millions of human beings, as the objective of the

international community as a whole and should accept the goal that within a decade no child will go to bed hungry, that no family will fear for its next day's bread, and that no human being's future and capacities will be stunted by malnutrition. "Time", the WFC proclaimed, "is short. Urgent and sustained action is vital."¹ There was no note of dissent to this resolution.

WFC's second resolution was specifically on rural development. It urged for improved agrarian structures, economic growth with equity and assistance to reduce rural poverty in the interest of more equitable development. Again, there was no note of dissent to this resolution as well. The WFC was attended at the level of ministers from the member States of Africa.

But, in practice, the traditional bias against agriculture continued, in spite of resolutions of the WLRC, (1964), the Special Report of 1971; the declaration of the WFC, 1974. The basic issues in rural development such as structural reform including the restructuring of national and rural institutions for the benefit of the rural population did not get priority attention from many member States of Africa. External assistance in the form of grants, loans and technical assistance - kept on flowing into these countries with hardly any impact and sustainability over a period of time. One category of such projects, which was the favourite of the donors was, "rural development" with the prefix "integrated", containing no credible consensus on what it really meant and how it was to be applied to solve the problems of the rural poor. A period of "confusion" followed which by and large still remain unresolved.

Hence, it was felt that WCARRD needed to be held to arrive by consensus and to formulate a credible Programme of Action in the field of rural development.

SECTION II

ORGANIZATION OF WCARRD

The decision to hold the WCARRD was taken by FAO in November 1977. The WCARRD was preceded by preparation of 115 case studies on various aspects of agrarian reform and rural development, submission of 82 country studies by member States, several versions of the draft working papers and conference documents.^{1/} The WCARRD Secretariat's two major documents for consideration by the participants were the following:

- (i) Review and analysis of agrarian reform and rural development in the developing countries since the mid 1960s; and
- (ii) Agrarian reform and rural development: national and international issues for discussion.

There were close collaboration with the members of the United Nations Administrative Co-ordination Committee's Task Force on Rural Development. No less than 39 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are active in the field of rural development collaborated with WCARRD. In addition to these, FAO set up a High Level Advisory Committee of Experts in this area, including an In-House Inter-Departmental Committee on rural development. A full-time Conference Secretariat was also set up, with adequate staff, elaborate facilities and requisite funds.

Attendance in WCARRD: WCARRD was attended by 1461 delegates and observers from:

- (i) 145 countries, of which 48 were from the Africa region;
- (ii) 22 United Nations bodies and specialized agencies; and
- (iii) 19 inter-governmental agencies.

The Conference was graced by the attendance of distinguished personalities, including elder statesman, Dr. J.K. Nyerere. In his address, Nyerere said, inter-alia,

"under present economic, political and social systems, the world's people were divided into two groups: those with access to resources and those without. Moreover, market forces tended to divert the world's resources - including the labour of others from meeting the real but ineffective demand of the poor into satisfying the luxury desires of the rich. Political power flowed in the same way so that publicly produced wealth also benefited the wealthy more than the poor and accrued to the towns rather than to the rural areas.... Fighting poverty was not just a question of production techniques and capital investment. It was a highly political topic, involving the distribution of wealth and power within nations and between nations... People had to be able to control their own activities within the framework of their village communities and to mount effective pressure nationally. People knew their basic needs and, if they had sufficient freedom, they could be relied upon to determine their own priorities of development and then to work for them."4/

The voice of Dr. Nyerere was echoed in the statements and after statements of the official delegations of the member States of the continent. Next to Dr. Nyerere, the most forthright statement was made by the delegation of the consortium of the NGOs, which strongly advocated the urgent need for people's participation in rural development.5/ These statements and the working papers which were circulated by the WCARRD Secretariat and by others were forcefully articulated in the statement by the Director-General of FAO, Dr. Edouard Saouma.6/

Statements like these moved and inspired the "Conference participants" 7/ who gathered from various regions of the world, including Africa to reflect and decide on what needs to be done on behalf of the landless, jobless and hopeless multitude of the rural sector. The decision of the WCARRD was to adopt, inter-alia, a 17-point Declaration of Principles and a Programme of Action.

Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action: The declaration of principles was based on:

- (i) The belief that poverty, hunger and malnutrition retard national development efforts and negatively affect world social and economic stability and that their eradication is the primary objective of world development; and
- (ii) The conviction that agrarian reform is a critical component of rural development and that the sustained improvement of rural areas, in the context of promotion of national self-reliance and the building of the New International Economic Order, requires fuller and more equitable access to land, water and other natural resources, wide-spread sharing of economic and political power.^{8/}

The Programme of Action had the following six broad elements at national level:

- (i) Access to land, water and other natural resources;
- (ii) People's participation;
- (iii) Integration of women in rural development;
- (iv) Access to inputs, markets and services;
- (v) Development of non-farm rural activities;
- (vi) Education, training and extension.

At the international level, it had five major elements, viz.

- (i) International trade;
- (ii) Economic and technical co-operation among developing countries;
- (iii) Foreign investment;
- (iv) Development assistance; and
- (v) Programme of action for FAO and other organizations of the United Nations System.

After the adoption of the Declaration of Principles and the Programme of Action, the Director General of FAO in his concluding remarks, stated, inter-alia,

"The Declaration of Principles not only defined agrarian reform and rural development but also provided a conceptual and moral orientation for future action... The Conference had brought out the fact that national governments were aware that failure to follow up the Programme of Action would bring about increasing instability in their societies. It also made clear that the international community must rise to the task set out for it in the Programme of Action in order to avoid cultivating the seeds of its own decay, as well as of global disarray... The Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action constituted an important milestone on the long and difficult march towards the abolition of poverty and hunger, marking a new era in development". 9/

SECTION III

FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

The initiative to take follow-up actions at the international level was left with FAO. It was also given the role of lead agency of the Administrative Co-ordination Committee's Task Force on Rural Development (ACCTF/RD) which regularly meets and has 29 members from the United Nations System.

The major areas of follow-up actions by the international community were the following:

- (i) High-level WCARRD follow-up policy mission;
- (ii) Global, Regional and country level studies on rural poverty;
- (iii) Inter-agency meetings;
- (iv) Consultation with member States;
- (v) Round table discussions around specific topics;
- (vi) Development of socio-economic indicators to assess progress in agrarian reform and rural development;
- (vii) Preparation and submission of periodic progress reports on WCARRD;

(viii) Initiation of participatory rural development projects in selected countries.

WCARRD Follow-up Missions: The High Level WCARRD Follow-up Inter-Agency Policy missions were undertaken at the 'request' of member States. In Africa, eight such missions were undertaken in Benin, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Mozambique, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda and reports produced. The first mission was sent to Benin in 1981 and the last one in Uganda in 1985.

The organization of each WCARRD Inter-Agency Mission meant considerable technical and administrative preparations and commitment. For example, the mission to Tanzania which was organized in 1982 involved the organization of an Inter-agency team of 14 UN experts. The duration of the mission itself was two weeks. During the period the mission met as many as sixty-four officials, including the Prime Minister.

The mission produced a well documented report which included, inter-alia, a set of recommendations and six project ideas, involving a total foreign exchange cost of nearly one million US dollars. Implementation of the various recommendations of the mission has been favourable and while it would not be fair to attribute on the charges now taking place in Tanzania to WCARRD; nevertheless WCARRD definitely had its impact on Tanzania's current policy and programme directions.

Country studies on rural poverty: The second follow-up activity was an assessment of a series of studies on rural poverty. These studies revealed the true nature and scope of the growing poverty in the various region of the world. In Africa, such studies were carried out in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Somalia in 1983 and 1984.

The Ghana study revealed that "at the turn of the century, Ghana was seen to be the richest black African country with the highest per capita income in Sub-Saharan Africa in 1950. Most writers thought that Ghana after independence would become the show piece of African political acumen and economic activities."^{10/}

The record of Ghana, since the sixties, was of economic stagnation. ^{11/} The effects of economic stagnation have been more acutely felt in the rural sector. The inflationary pressures, which have been more intense in the rural sector have weakened the purchasing power of the peasant farmer. The real producer price of cocoa, for example, declined by 81.4 per cent between 1970 and 1980. ^{12/} The food self-sufficiency ratio which was 85 in 1966 declined to below 60 in 1986. ^{13/} In an agrarian economy like Ghana, the access to cultivable land is the most important determinant in income distribution in rural areas. In Ghana, most farmers derived their livelihood from cultivating small farms. The median size of holdings in 1970 was 3.6 acres and 55 per cent of all holdings were below 3.9 acres. However, there is severe inequality in land ownership. The 55 per cent of the holders, with farms of less than 4 acres, owned only 10 per cent of the cultivated land area while the top 10 per cent had over 57 per cent. The overall Gini ratio was 0.64 ^{14/} which is exceedingly high considering the traditional heritage of egalitarianism.

In the light of these findings, a Ghanaian scholar observed "it is evident that poverty is worsening especially in the rural areas. In other words, the rural populations are not participating in economic and social development."^{15/} And yet, "...the record of official policies for rural poverty alleviation has been dismal..."^{16/} Ghana has recently introduced far-reaching rural structural adjustments which are more or less in line with the Programme of Action of WCARRD.

Regional Inter-Agency Meeting: FAO also periodically organized regional inter-agency meetings to review the contributions of the UN System in the Implementation of the Programme of Action of WCARRD. Four such meetings were held in Africa 1980, 1981, 1982 and 1984. The last one was held jointly with ECA's African Regional Inter-Agency Committee on Rural Development. FAO as a lead agency within the UN system on rural development is handling the issue of regional or global inter-agency coordination through the ACC Task Force on Rural Development.

Government consultations: In addition to High-level missions, Studies on Rural Poverty and Inter-agency Meetings, FAO organized Government Consultations on WCARRD whose objectives was to discuss and sensitize governments on the implementation of the Programme of Action. Three consultations were held in Africa in 1983, 1985 and 1989. Without any doubt FAO, the sponsor of WCARRD tried very hard to impress upon Governments that the implementation of the Programme of Action of WCARRD was their responsibility and obligation.

Seminars on agrarian reform: In addition to the inter-agency meetings and government consultations, several regional seminars on specific issues relating to agrarian reform were also held. The purpose of these seminars was to have the benefit of the technical assessments by scholars and civil servants who are involved and interested in the rural development processes of their countries. Since the regional workshops organized by FAO in Africa are numerous we shall only mention two selected examples. These important regional workshops directly related to WCARRD had important policy implications for African Governments actively involved in rural development. The first one was limited to the centrally planned economies of Africa and held in 1983. This Regional Workshop, which brought together African and non-African scholars on rural development process in centrally planned economies in Africa, recommended a series of policy issues for adoption by countries following the methodology of Central Planning. Among the policy issues highlighted include the need to organize co-operatives using the techniques of participatory development; the urgency for these centrally planned economies to economize on their scarce resources and to discourage expensive and costly investments in such areas as state farms and so on. The second one was a Round Table on the Dynamics of Land Tenure and Agrarian Systems in Africa. The latter covered all the major ecological zones, which included as diverse economic systems as Kenya and Ethiopia. The Round Table was based on country studies and was held in Nairobi in 1985. We shall review some of the country studies since these studies reveal the structural impediments which need serious remedial action.

The country studies show that in Burkina Faso "land has become an area of confrontation between populations" 17/ The land reform of 1984 remains unimplemented. In Ghana, there is "contradiction between the claims of local chiefs of sovereignty over the land and that of the Ghana Central Government, implying "double citizenship" 18/ and a trend towards "emergence of rural capitalists" and "development of share cropping". The Ghana study recognizes the critical role of credit for investment and capital accumulation in agriculture. In Niger the study indicated the predominance of the customary land tenure system, particularly, access through inheritance. 19/ "The right of every farmer to full use of his land was officially recognized in 1974 although the village membership as a prerequisite to access to land continues to be important.20/ In Togo a land reform act was passed in 1974 but was enforced only after five years, i.e., in 1979. There is a wide diversity of land tenure systems in Togo. But hereditary process of access to land account for 70 per cent of the land. There is now a growing tendency towards individual ownership and fragmentation of farm plots. The average farm size is only 1.4 ha. 21/ which shows great diversity in availability of arable land in relation to population in individual member States of the continent.

The study on Kenya indicated that Kenya's first major step was to buy the large estate farms from the foreign owners at full market price - the most generous compensation in the recent history of land reform - and then "settle" them with influential and wealthy segment of Kenya's population. One of the dualisms that Kenya, therefore, suffers is the duality of 1.5 million small farmers as against 3,000 owners of huge estates in the rural sector.22/ Another consequence is that the farmer "reserves" are over-exploited and the large farms are under-exploited. There is appreciation at the technical level of the need to correct the unhealthy paradox but the political climate in the country is not quite helpful. 23/ The official preference seems to be in favour of organizations of producers' co-operatives on the ground that "it would be better to opt for such land policies which could assure the productivity and profitability of agricultural labour and concentrate on the agrarian system and production problems rather than on the problems of title ownership." 24/ Some justification for this preference was

provided by the preceding workshop (1984) which maintained, inter-alia, "...Production co-operatives have been recognized as a superior method for utilizing available resources in an equitable and efficient way..."^{25/}

The Lesotho study revealed that there is no uncultivated arable land left due to population pressure. ^{26/} The communal land tenure system continues to be the rule there and the maximum size of a plot is 2 ha. The customary land tenure system is reportedly not an obstacle to development so far. It is the abuse of land use by the local chiefs, which limits the development potential.

The Madagascar study states that "before, during and after colonization, Madagascar has always had a particularly large and impressive body of legal instruments". And yet, according to it, the application of the law is extremely uneven. ^{27/} Access to land is a political instrument and its control allows the emergence of new elites, who are the only ones to benefit locally from the process of accumulation, their role being linked to that of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie at national level..." ^{28/} In addition to the uneven application of law, the impact of the renter-owners as a new elite effectively blocks any possibility of a redistribution of holdings. Consequently, the plots of the actual farmers is extremely small, so small that the produce or the income from them has to be heavily supplemented (by over two-third of total income) from non-farm activities.

One of the important studies conducted was on Cameroon. Cameroon, in its efforts to reverse rural exodus, tried several approaches including financial assistance on re-imburseable basis since 1977 to induce the young farmers and artisans to stay back in the villages. The target groups were those under 25. However the dropouts rates were 45-50 per cent. Hence, the Government shifted its emphasis to a higher and wider age bracket, 25-50 with the objective of tuning them into "rural entrepreneurs" having access to technical resources from a farm mechanization center. Ten thousand farmers have already benefitted from this experiment. The question that arises is how many of them did gainfully engage themselves in agriculture and other non-farm activities in the rural sector. No information is available

from the report. The usual experience is that entrepreneurs do not generally stay in the rural sector. If they do and acquire skill as well, they do not apply it by being literally engaged in farming. They end up as "unemployed specialists" and uncomfortable in rural setting. There is thus a case to settle for elementary or appropriate training, specifically geared to current level of husbandry.

It is evident from these country studies that:

- (i) If the present trend on aid or commercial import of food production continues, then every second person of the continent will have to depend on aid or commercial import of food by the year 2000 despite the fact that:
 - (a) over two-thirds of the population is engaged in agriculture, and
 - (b) over one-half of the world's unutilized arable land is in Africa.
- (ii) Concepts like "land tenure", "agrarian" and "right" need to be re-examined and adapted to suit the historical and cultural contexts of the member States and appropriate land reforms undertaken.
- (iii) There is no such thing as uniform "customary" land tenure system. The system varies not only between but also within countries. In fact, there could be several systems within a single country which developed over time from various historical factors. The findings of these studies were substantially endorsed by a subsequent study, which was done in 1989.^{29/}
- (iv) Rural women, although major producers, neither have the right of inheritance nor access to credit.
- (v) Contrary to conventional wisdom, there was a considerable inequality in member States and this was combined with rural poverty. At the same time, there was proportionately more unutilized land on the upper end of the distribution.

The overall conclusion of the Round Table was

"... to create a land tenure system that would help to attain growth with equity. Nevertheless, a change in or a reorganization of existing land tenure system should try to consider or anticipate the short- and long-term effects on agricultural production, surplus generation and capital formation which were the basic elements in the transformation of the rural areas in particular and the national economy in general..."^{30/}

Socio-economic indicators: Another technical instrument for follow-up of WCARRD developed by FAO was the formulation of a set of socio-economic indicators which could help measure accurately the economic and social parameters of development. To this end that the initial set of indicators were tried out in Kenya, Cameroon, Togo and Zambia. The findings were presented in an Expert Consultation on Socio-Economic Indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation of Agrarian Reform and Rural Development for Africa. The expert consultation was held at ECA, Addis Ababa, from 10 to 14 May 1982.

The Consultation in reviewing the indicators for their selection emphasized the following criteria:

(a) appropriateness to identify the rural poor and their characteristics;

(b) sensitivity in measuring short- as well as long-term changes in low-income rural men's and women's access to scarce resources and participation in rural organizations and local governments;

(c) capacity to represent the resources and potential of the rural poor - men and women - upon which rural development programmes can build; and

(d) relevance and feasibility in the context of the country's statistical capability. ^{31/}

It also stressed two other points, besides others, viz.,

- (i) the use of poverty lines based on the single measures of income (or consumer expenditure as proxy to income) for the identification and monitoring of rural poverty is insufficient. It must be supplemented by measures relating to nutrition, health, education, housing, etc., and
- (ii) core indicators must be disaggregated by sex as a means of monitoring and evaluation of equity between low-income rural men and women.

Periodic Progress Reports: Still another instrument for follow-up of WCARRD developed by FAO was the preparation of periodic progress reports by governments themselves on the implementation of the Programme of Action of WCARRD. In 1983, only as few as eight countries of the region (Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo) submitted their performance report. They partly provided materials for the first consolidated progress report (1984). ^{32/} The response for the second such report (1988)^{33/} was better - slightly less than one third of the countries reported (Benin, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritania, Nigeria, Sudan, Togo, Zaire and Zimbabwe). The two reports have a wealth of information and will be very briefly covered in the next Section of this paper.

Income-generating projects: In addition to these consolidated publications, FAO, in collaboration with several members of the ACCTF/RD and donor agencies, started income-generating projects under the People's Participation Programme for the benefit of the rural poor. Projects of this kind were started in several countries in Africa such as in Ghana ^{34/}, Swaziland ^{35/} and Lesotho ^{36/}. The performance of these projects have already been covered separately in the Secretariat's publications.^{37/} They will not, therefore, be covered here again. However, it seems that the project in Ghana was interventionist. The project beneficiaries thus had no opportunity to decide either objectives or the priorities. These had already been spelt out in the project

document. In Swaziland, the project was not innovatory in its insistence on people's participation. In Lesotho it originated from another project which was started prior to WCARRD, 1979, under the joint auspices of the ACCTF/RD. But its viability, net of subsidy, was in question so also the financial integrity of some of its beneficiaries. Lesotho's experience shows a concept may be appealing and attractive in paper but in practice it may be "subverted" by the weakness for immediate personal gains on the part of at least a section of the intended beneficiaries/participants. The more basic issue that arise in such projects at micro level is: Is it logically possible to have authentic people's participation at micro level in the absence of policy commitment to restructure the socio-economic and political system in favour of participation?

This dilemma is now widely recognized within the continent; 38/ which at least partly explains why an "International Conference on Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa" was held at Arusha, Tanzania from 12-16 February 1990. Its formal central theme was "Putting the People First"39/ a theme which was convincingly argued as far back as in 1968. 40/

SECTION IV ACTIONS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

It is reasonable to assume that the commitments which are implicit in the WCARRD's Declaration of Principles and Programme of Actions will be honoured by the member States since all the forty-eight of the African States which attended the WCARRD endorsed its proceedings. Moreover, the Heads of State and Government of Africa in 1985 unequivocally declared that "the development of our continent is the primary responsibility of our Governments and peoples".

This declaration at the highest level is in addition to the statements which were made at the ministerial level, in the periodic Regional Conferences of FAO and during the Government Consultations referred to in the preceding Section. Besides these two considerations, there is another important factor to expect that the governments themselves

have to act to honour what they commit. Moreover, action by external agencies/countries can only supplement but not substitute local initiative, efforts and shared sacrifice. A nation cannot be developed on borrowed steam. The prime actors must be the people and their governments in any country.

Let us now briefly review what actions, the countries themselves took to implement their part of the obligation. The basis of the review is the information provided by them to FAO in 1983 and 1988 respectively. This information formed the basis for preparing the following reports:

- (i) How Development Strategies Benefit the Rural Poor (1984); and
- (ii) The Impact of Development Strategies on the Rural Poor (1989).

These reports were published by FAO, the sponsor organization. In order to get a wholistic picture of the country level experiences in agrarian reform and rural development, ten case studies, which were carried out by the ECA Secretariat, have also been used in this review. These case studies have direct bearings on the Programme of Action of WCARRD.

Policy shifts: In Africa at least four countries have been noted for their explicit policy shifts in agrarian reform and rural development since 1979. They are Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia and the Gambia. In Sudan the greater stress was on economic growth which was contrary to the spirit of the WCARRD. In Kenya, time bound targets were set for provision of safe drinking water for the rural poor. Ethiopia set targets for employment, provision of basic needs and eradication of illiteracy, besides growth. The Gambia in its second Five-Year Plan (1980/1981-1985/1986), apart from economic growth, emphasized decentralization, reduction in rural-urban income disparity, provision of primary health care and increased primary school enrolment. But, none of the two reports provide any data or evidences whether the effect or impact of these policy shifts were substantial or inconsequential in alleviating rural poverty.

Policy shifts and targets, to be meaningful, have to be made operational by, inter-alia, transfer of resources in favour of the rural sector. But the country reports did not permit an identification of the share, specifically earmarked for rural areas (not to speak of the rural poor) in public sector expenditure for economic and social infrastructure.

Greater Emphasis on Agriculture: Available data, however, suggests that a "majority" of countries have shown a greater commitment to agriculture during 1980-1984 compared to 1975-1979, although countries like Zaire and Nigeria allocated a disproportionately low share of public expenditure to agriculture, relative to their share in GDP. The caveat is important in the African context, given the extremely uneven size of various countries, their population and area of land under agriculture, particularly cereals.

Hence, the word "majority" of countries can be misleading, unless one has information about the countries which constituted the majority of the reporting countries. Moreover the ECA studies shows that the commitment of the continent in favour of agriculture did not match the emphasis given to it in the Lagos Plan of Action. The region's aggregate allocation of seven per cent of public sector allocation was also lower than that of Asia and the Pacific 41/. It should be noted that aggregate figures mask or cover up the unevenness of allocation between export crops and cereals. Eighty per cent of the products of the latter are contributed by small farmers, most of whom are rural women.

Population Policy: The efforts to develop agriculture and rural sector may be strengthened, neutralized or negatively affected depending on the rate of change in the population variables - so critical is its importance. Kenya has the highest (4 per cent) growth rate in population. Contrary to the continent's position in the sixties and mid-seventies, three-fourths of the member States now formally endorse planned parenthood. But, to endorse is not necessarily to implement a policy. Hence, the continent continues to have the highest population growth rate.

None of these policy shifts ipso facto benefit the rural poor though. Such benefits depend upon national policies

regarding employment, income and exchange entitlements of the poor, besides the effects of international factors and policies. The rural poor as a matter of priority and urgency need to obtain: (i) basic needs more particularly adequate and stable food supplies and (ii) gainful employment and income.

Village Forestry: However, whatever food supplies are available, they have to be cooked. The search for fuelwood for increasing number of rural population is part of the explanation for the rapid deforestation. In 1981, 96 million people were already unable to satisfy their minimum energy needs for cooking and heating. A part of this population resides in the highly populated eastern highlands of Africa. To overcome the rural fuelwood crisis and facilitate land rehabilitation, some steps were taken to encourage the growth of village forestry and shelter belts, in such countries as Burkina Faso, Zambia, Sudan and Senegal. The gestation period of such initiative is, however, rather long.

Credit to fishermen: Another area of concern of the WCARRD was the development of fisheries as alternative sources of employment, income and nutrition. Small-scale fishermen represent 90 per cent of the fishing population in Africa. In several countries, mostly in West Africa, women's role is critical to the survival of the small-scale fisheries. And yet, the only African country which has taken specific measures, particularly in provision of credit to fishermen is the Seychelles.

Access to land: One of the areas of major interest to the rural poor of Africa was the possibility of equitable access to arable land. There were three broad trends in this respect, viz., (i) socialization of land ownership (Ethiopia); (ii) privatization of land rights (Kenya); and (iii) adaptations of existing communal tenures to modify the relations between the tribal chiefs and the state (the Gambia and Lesotho). But none of these can be legitimately related to the WCARRD, 1979. For example, the socialization of land ownership in Ethiopia pre-dated WCARRD at least by five years. Access to resources or to rights is not automatic in developing countries. Such access has to be acquired by several means including collective efforts. ILO has been

pioneer in getting certain conventions such as Convention No. 37 (relating to freedom of association) and No. 141 (regarding rural organizations) adopted. But, only few countries ratified these conventions. Ratification by such limited number of countries is itself the most telling comment on the gap between rhetorics and action. Only in Ghana and Zaire there was a new development in mobilization of the wage-earning agricultural workers and self-employed rural workers. They formed Rural Trade Unions.

Co-operative societies: co-operatives could be a fora of organized rural poor's interest. But in Africa they are less significant as economic organizations in rural areas even in such countries, as Mozambique and Ethiopia where official government policy favours co-operatives. The co-operative societies got only 9 per cent of the total loans given by the Agricultural and Industrial Development Bank in 1985-1986 as against 74 per cent of the loans which were received by the State Farms in Ethiopia. The status of the co-operatives is even weaker in Cameroon, Liberia, Lesotho and Uganda. Only in Kenya, the co-operatives are comparatively in stronger position. Even there only eighteen per cent of the institutional credit was routed through them in the early eighties. In Africa as a whole, there has been a continuing low share of institutional credit for small farmers.^{42/}

However, in the same Eastern and Southern region there has been a promising development outside the formalised co-operative structure, i.e., the emergence of small functional groups in Zimbabwe called savings clubs. They served as receiving/utilization mechanisms for services as well as for income generating activities. These clubs have been able, through combined savings and bulk purchases, to attract private companies to cater to their needs for farming. This innovative experience were not replicated in other countries.

NGOs: The potential contribution of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in rural development was only recently recognized in the continent. The African indigenous NGOs generally were not structured and were financially dependent on International NGOs. They limited their efforts to project funding with the exception of a few such as the Kenyan

National Farmers' Union which tried to represent the interests of the farming community.

The rural workers' organizations' and the NGOs' roles in rural development in Africa can be more effective if there is institutionalized scope for participation of people in their own development. It involves decentralization specially of decision-making and the planning processes. Kenya's district focus, Ethiopia's peasant associations, service co-operatives and production co-operatives and the Gambia's regional development planning mechanism are indicative of the trends towards decentralization. However, there is large inter-country variations in this trend. Besides, decentralization does not necessarily result in increased participation of the poor, if the decentralized structures are not managed or largely influenced by the beneficiaries themselves.

Use of Fertilizers: Period of the eighties in Africa were not marked, as has been noted earlier, by any significant steps towards implementation of the principle "land to the tiller". Hence, the access of small, marginal and landless farmers to yield raising inputs becomes more important. In spite of the importance, the use of fertilizers for food crops (which are grown by women and small holders) was only 5kg per ha. on an average, with only 4 per cent coverage of total food crop area. Similarly, yield raising seeds were rarely used, except in Kenya, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan and a few other countries.

Producer price: The producer prices have direct bearing either in alleviation or aggravation of rural poverty. The findings show the real producer prices for (i) cereals fell in 20 out of 38 countries and (ii) export crops fell in 30 out of 38 countries during 1981-1983 relative to 1978-1980. Moreover, the cost of fertilizer went up. The increased cost was partly covered by subsidies. The benefit of fertilizer subsidy however benefited the well-to-do producers of export crops.^{43/} In Africa inadequate rural infrastructure, particularly roads, led to high marketing costs and low effective prices to the small farmers.

Non-Farm Employment: Rural non-farm employment programmes can potentially improve the economic conditions and provide employment to the rural poor. But this possibility was very unevenly tried out in Africa. In Nigeria, rural industries hardly featured in national development plans; while in Tanzania and Kenya rural industrialization was given some importance. In Francophone West Africa, the emphasis was on large and light industries. If agro-industries were excluded, only 2-3 per cent of total investment in this subregion was devoted to rural small-scale industries/crafts.

Extension Training and Research: Several African countries took steps to extend the coverage and improve the relevance of the extension and training since the WCARRD. Ethiopia provided extension and training through the peasant associations, Burkina Faso through its 6,000 agro-trainers. Mozambique has set up a national directorate of rural development. The Gambia, Kenya, Zambia introduced the Training and Visit Extension services. Egypt decentralized its extension services. Malawi has introduced a new administrative structure into the national extension system. Mauritania has now an extension/farmer ratio of 1:500. In Ethiopia and Kenya the linkage points between extension and research are the experimental stations, where extension workers are given training on new findings and recommendations. In Tchad 30 per cent of extension workers have no formal education. Mozambique also lacks qualified extension personnel. Although the initiatives of some of those states is to be appreciated, their effect on agricultural productivity remained negligible during the post-WCARRD period.

Zimbabwe, Kenya, Burundi, Cameroon and Guinea had been trying to redesign their extension services to provide services to female farmers. The first consideration was to provide adequate agricultural education and training for women and women trainers. Malawi set up extension structures capable of reaching rural women in their capacity as farmers and deployed male extensionists to reach female farmers. It also developed a circular that provided rationale of female farmers' needs as well as a method for improving the delivery of extension services to women. Kenya gave its male extensionists basic training in home economics, extension and

other programmes, which were more relevant to women. In Benin, Ghana and Guinea, women's extension groups were organized for the introduction of improved technologies for fish processing and conservation. Cameroon was using female "information brokers" to organize women's groups to meet male extension officers periodically.

A number of African countries took interest in agricultural research and technology. Cameroon has research programme for basic food crop such as roots, tubers and sorghum, Gabon for cassava and Mauritius for potatoes and maize - all grown by women. It is to be appreciated that there is a considerable lag on investments in human resources. To have region wide effect at least the major countries of the region have to make adequate investment for appropriate technology. Or else, the effect, in the regional context is bound to be nominal. In fact, studies were undertaken in four countries to assess the impact of technology on rural development. If these country studies may be regarded as broadly indicative of the impact of technology on rural development in the region, the effect has been marginal in many cases. Even in those cases where increased production has been achieved, these have not been matched by corresponding increases in income and employment for the majority of the rural population.^{44/}

Rural Women in Development: In Africa women constitute 47 per cent of the agricultural labour force and produce almost 80 per cent of its food crops. Male migration from rural areas obliged women to become de facto heads of the families and producers of food. The number of de jure female headed households was estimated to be 22 per cent in Africa and in areas of high male migration like in Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana the percentage of de facto female-headed households could be as high as 60 per cent. These proportions did not change much during the period under review.

The role of women in development got better attention since the WCARRD. Some examples of enhanced women activities include countries like Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Guinea Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Togo, Zimbabwe. These countries made provision in their development plans for necessary infrastructural support (such

as rural water supply) and for labour-saving technologies for the benefit of women. Senegal and Togo adopted National Plans for Women, which gave importance to reducing the burden of women's work, providing training to increase food production and improving their living conditions. Kenya took steps to ensure that the participation of women in national development was strengthened through various activities and institutional arrangements. It was also making provisions for full participation of women in the co-operatives. Zimbabwe, Zambia and Senegal opted for women's co-operatives. However, women's access to credit continued to remain limited even in countries where they are the major producers of food except in Cameroon, Kenya and Malawi. In Malawi, the rate of repayment of loan by women was so good that a reorientation of national credit policy is in process.

There had been some feeble efforts to facilitate formation of women's organizations for participation to assert their legitimate rights as equal partners in life and development. They were being built up in Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique to increase rural women's participation in politics. One line of advance in organization for socio-economic empowerment had been through the transformation of traditional informal self-help groups into more formalized institutions. This approach was being followed by Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Senegal, among others.

Illiteracy has been an obstacle in the effort to facilitate participation of women. Hence, some countries did take action to promote women's education, health and employment opportunities. In Kenya, women represent seventy per cent of total adult students, which, by implication, incidentally means they did not get a chance to study when they were growing up. Gambia and Liberia targeted women and children in their health policies. Malawi adopted a holistic approach to women's health issues based on the development of inter-sectoral activities aimed at raising women's self-esteem and reducing their burden of work.

IRD Projects: We have so far discussed the national efforts in implementing individual components of rural development in different countries. Let us now very briefly note the national actions in the implementation of rural development

components as a package, which generally had the name tag of "integrated rural development projects". The review is based on five country studies, which were carried out in Ghana, Mauritius, Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe in 1986. 45/

It was found that though the intended beneficiaries had some degree of participation in the formulation of the programmes, it was mainly outsiders who did the technical work and manned the senior jobs, suggesting inadequate indigenous expertise. The projects were beset with various problems, such as changes in objectives, inadequate or delayed funding, inappropriate designation of an executing agency and other administrative snags. Furthermore, cost-effectiveness was aggravated due to difficulties of co-ordination between the programmes and the concerned ministries and local authorities, though co-ordination within the project was maintained. The cumulative effect of management, financial and co-ordination problems has been reflected in some cases in: (a) extension of the duration of the programmes; (b) their cost escalation; and (c) reduced delivery of planned outputs.

These conclusions were substantiated corroborated by subsequent evaluation of six other projects in Ethiopia, Ghana, Tanzania, Zambia, Kenya and Lesotho in 1989. 46/

SECTION V

IMPACT OF THE ACTIONS DURING THE DECADE

The WCARRD objectives, to repeat very briefly, were: (i) economic growth, (ii) equity, (iii) people's participation, (iv) integration of women in development and (v) transfer of resources to the rural sector.

In this Section we shall very briefly try to look for widespread favourable impact, if any, of the WCARRD follow-up activities in attaining these objectives in Africa.

Economic Growth:

- (i) Africa's GDP per capita (in 1980 dollars) declined from \$752 in 1980 to 641 in 1987 characterized by a trend in increased disparity in income distribution.^{47/} 65.2 per cent of the rural population live in poverty and survive on less than one-third of the per capita national income. The decade (1979-1989) was marked by economic stagnation, ^{48/} crisis, food deficiency and starvation.
- (ii) There has been a deterioration in the incidence of under-nutrition in the region as a whole in contrast to other regions, where there was marginal improvement.
- (iii) Africa had 83 million adult illiterates in 1985. In 19 countries of the region, more than half the adult population continues to be illiterate. Nigeria alone accounted for more than one-third of the illiterates in the continent. A survey carried out in Nigeria shows close correlation between illiteracy and poverty. 67 per cent of the hired agricultural labourers and small farmers were not only illiterate but had the lowest income.
- (iv) "Low levels of health and literacy are significant correlates of poverty," observes FAO, the sponsor organization of the WCARRD. If that is so, it must have been more acutely true in the African region since many African governments had to substantially reduce their expenditures on education, health and other social services in order to release resources for debt services and to balance their budgets. ^{49/} These then are the bitter harvests, which the rural poor of Africa had to "reap" during the decade 1979-1989. In fact, over a million of the poor, most of whom were from the rural areas perished during the great famines of 1983/84. Many more would have died of starvation had it not been for the generosity of the international community.^{50/}

- (v) There was an increase of 6 million holdings in Africa during 1980-1985, diminution in the size of holdings, reduction of fallow periods and growing landlessness in some countries. But probably more damaging in its effects on landlessness in Africa has been the privatization of land holdings in some countries with loss of land by the poorer farmers.

Equity:

- (vi) The concept of equity has been relegated to the back seat and substituted by renewed interest in "Growth" with the "protection of the vulnerables"^{51/}, those damaged by the structural adjustment programmes.

People's participation:

- (vii) The concept of "people's participation" still continues to be the centre of the agenda in the current debate for alternative strategies in rural and national development. ^{52/}

Integration of Women in Development:

- (viii) The "Integration of women in development" remains a dim distant vision. ^{53/} However, considerable progress has been made in Africa over the past decade in recognizing the important role that women can play in national development.

Transfer of Resources:

- (ix) The flow of resources to the rural sector, meagre as it was, has been reduced to a trickle specially in the areas of education and medical facilities. ^{54/}

However agriculture is increasingly getting greater attention. WCARRD is an important milestone in international development efforts to alleviate the plight of the rural poor. It spelled out correctly that development can come about only through the committed participation of the beneficiaries, the rural poor. Greater challenge still awaits national governments and the international community to translate the ideals of WCARRD into practical actions for the benefit of the poor in the next decade and beyond.

SECTION VI

POLICY OPTIONS FOR THE NEXT DECADE

The realistic possibility of structural transformation and development of the rural sector of Africa in the next decade will basically depend on re-empowering the marginalized and disadvantaged segments of the population. This has already been emphasized in the AAF-SAP. It was preceded by, besides others,

- (i) Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos (1980);
- (ii) ECA and Africa's Development, 1983-2008: A Preliminary Perspective Study (1983);
- (iii) Beyond Recovery, ECA-Revised Perspectives of Africa's Development, 1988-2000 (1988);
- (iv) Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery, 1986-1990 (1985); and
- (v) United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 (1986).

And this point was made in varying degrees in these documents. And yet, as of 1988 only about one-third of the African member States (viz. Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Tchad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Lesotho, Madagascar and Mali) have ratified ILO's Convention No. 87 (Freedom of Association and Protection of Right to Organize) and only 0.4 per cent countries (Kenya and Zimbabwe) have ratified convention No. 141 (Rural Workers' Organization). Such poor ratifications (let alone implementation) is not sufficiently convincing evidence of the commitment of the member-States to initiate the process of re-empowering the people. This process has to be accelerated.

Need to Empower People: Once the barriers to empowering the people are swept away and the people are firmly behind the steering wheel of development, with civil servants - national and/or international - at the back seat to give specialized

advice, the legitimacy of power is enriched by expertise and experience. With such grand combination, a nation then has to look at its felt needs and immediate priorities in relation to existing and potential implementation capacity and resources. This will mean shift away from the practice of "all for some" to "some for all". In other words, at the initial stage of participatory rural development, the emphasis will be on meeting the most basic of the needs of all, so that no one will go to bed hungry. Education, shelter, safe drinking water and health for all will be part of the package, to be sequentially or simultaneously met, depending on the factor-endowments of a member State.

Urban-Rural Parity: A steadfast adherence to people oriented development may mean for most member States to deliberately let deteriorate or firmly ignore the enclaves of affluence, mechanized comfort, or preference to consume what is not internally produced or weakness for a life style which is inconsistent with the indigenous productive capacity. The amenities and facilities of the cities and capitals will then no longer have that magnetic pull effect to suck away the younger (rural) generation, with entrepreneurial potential. Some comparability will gradually emerge between the quality of life of existing rural sector and the modern enclaves even if at a lower level of "equilibrium". Such comparability or parity could very well result in a lower level of equilibrium of income, saving and investment (but it would not be poverty trap) at the initial stage of transition in favour of people-oriented development. It will have the potential for the production possibility curve to move upward and for the equilibrium point to be at a higher level. In this scenario, the terms 'rural' and 'urban' with their existing connotation of mass poverty and affluence for few should gradually come to a meeting point and be known as national development via structural adjustment and shared austerity.

It could and would require a conscious decision to enforce a "moratorium" on any further expansion of socio-economic infrastructure and amenities of the enclaves of power and affluence - capitals, cities and towns in Africa until the rural sector catches up.

The guiding principle should be that every part, person or personality of Africa (and in broader sense, the South) must suffer and endure what life in the continent to-day essentially is: rural, under-developed and hungry since only the "wearer knows best where the shoe pinches". Academic knowledge or ideological or even religious sympathy for those vast majority, whose life is short, nasty and brutish, and who, are hewers of wood and drawers of water, is no substitute for real life experience on a continuing basis. Only a hungry person knows how severe is the pang of hunger. Similarly, an uneducated person realises the handicaps of an illiterate. A poor family, which sleeps under a leaking roof in rainy season, realises the sad plight of another family in the similar situation. A destitute old woman, in tattered and insufficient cloth, understands what severe winter means. A young loving mother, whose infant child dies in her lap of malnutrition, insanitary condition and lack of medical care, knows what it means to be deprived of the joy of motherhood and so on. Others, however, well meaning and imaginative, can only guess. And yet we all have only one life either to enjoy or suffer. Most suffer in Africa to-day or for that matter in the South.

Social maxima and minima on current consumption: Life has to be shared austerity or even misery with social maxima and minima on current consumption - public and private. As AAF-SAP rightly points out Africa has to adjust, balance its budget and go through structural transformation. The resources thus released must be ploughed back to the rural sector to correct decades of discrimination, improve its productivity, gain comparability if not parity with the "urban sector" and be the engine of harmonious development of the continent.

The other options, based on imitative growth models, have been tried out for three decades in Africa, with tragic consequences and an external debt over US\$ 240 billion or a per capita debt of \$480. If the historical trend scenario or option were to continue, real income in Africa will be so low by 1995 that between 65 and 80 per cent of the people will be clinically surviving below the poverty line. Such tragic possibility is hardly a dignified option for fifty sovereign states of the continent.

Normative Scenario of Development: The region is thus, left with only one pragmatic option, i.e. to follow the normative scenario of development, with equity, if its dignity and sovereignty are to be upheld and strengthened. Sovereignty was regained by the collective efforts of the people. It can be strengthened and made meaningful again by the people alone and not, behind their back.^{55/} This message is loud and clear from, besides others, the Abuja statement, 1987, ^{56/} Khartoum Declaration, 1988 ^{57/} Resolution No. 3(v) on Rural Structural Transformation and Development of the Fifth Conference of African Ministers of Social Affairs, 1989 ^{58/} and the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation, 1990. ^{59/} They leave no scope for the post-sixties' cynical attitudes like "after me the deluge". Africa has to again wake up and arise to collectively build a prosperous and humane society largely with its own resources, learning lessons from the lost decade of the eighties and taking serious note of the winds of change in various parts of the world.

This is the very point which was made back in 1977 by an eminent son of the soil when he said, inter alia, in the opening paragraph of his statement, "If economic development is to be self-sustaining and internalized and if national self-reliance is to be realised, integrated rural development must be pushed at all levels of Government and adequate resources must be allocated for this purpose. Development to be realized must be grassrooted and properly managed..."^{60/}

In 1979 WCARRD essentially came out with similar message; to which only lip-service was paid in the post-WCARRD period, with disastrous socio-economic consequences. The practice of "lip-service" will have to be firmly substituted by collective action on a continuing basis for Africa to win the war on (needless) want and poverty and regain its pride and dignity. It is in this respect that the ideals of WCARRD are still relevant and will remain so far many years to come.

FOOTNOTES

1. Some evidence of this statement may be derived from the two tables, which are given at the end of this paper.
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3. The source of information in this and following two paragraphs are FAO, Report of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, Rome, 12-20 July 1979, pp. 60-65
4. As recorded in FAO, Report of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, Rome, 12-20 July 1979, pp. 29-30.
5. Statement made by M. Rafransea of the Consortium of NGOs attending the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, Rome, 12-20 July 1979
6. Statement by Director-General of FAO at the opening of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, Rome, 12-20 July 1979 p.4
7. Ibid., p. 4
8. FAO, Report of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, Rome, 12-20 July 1979, p.1
9. Ibid., pp.57-58
10. K. Ewusi, The Dynamics of Rural Poverty in Ghana and Its Alleviation, FAO, Rome, 1983, p. 92
11. Ibid., pp. 23
12. Ibid., p. 93
13. J.A. Dadson, Modalities of Popular Participation in Rural Development in Ghana (cyclostyled paper), 1988, p.1
14. K. Ewusi, op.cit., p. 39
15. J.A. Dadson, op.cit., p.3
16. K. Ewusi, op.cit., p. 93
17. FAO Report of the Round Table on the Dynamics of Land Tenure and Agrarian Systems in Africa, Nairobi, 29-31 January 1985, FAO, Rome, 1985, p. 26
18. Ibid., p. 27
19. Ibid., p. 28
20. Ibid., p. 28
21. Ibid., p. 29

22. J. Heyer, Agricultural Development Policy in Kenya from the Colonial Period to 1975 in J. Heyer, et. al., (ed.) Rural Development in Tropical Africa, McMillan, London, 1982, p. 107
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24. Ibid., p. 31
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26. It is estimated that 120,000 households will be landless in the year 2000. See FAO, op.cit., p. 32
27. Ibid., pp. 32-33.
28. Ibid., p. 33
29. FAO, Impact of Land Tenure Changes and Agrarian Policies on Common Property Resources in Africa (WCARRD/GC/III/5/Afr.), FAO, Rome, 1989, pp. 1-7
30. Ibid., p.4
31. FAO, Draft Report on the Conclusions and Recommendations of the Expert Consultation on Socio-Economic Indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation of Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, Addis Ababa, 10-14 May 1982, p. 2
32. FAO, How Development Strategies Benefit the Rural Poor, Rome, 1984
33. FAO, The Impact of Development Strategies on the Rural Poor, Rome, 1988
34. ECA, Modalities of Popular Participation in Rural Development in Selected African Countries: The Cases of Ghana and Tanzania, (ECA/SDA/IRD/89/1.1(i)(b)) Addis Ababa, 1989, pp. 2-12
35. ECA, Modalities of Popular Participation in Rural Development in Selected African Countries (ECA/SDA/IRD/88/1.1(ii)(a)), Addis Ababa, 1988, See for Swaziland project, pp. 9-10, 20-21, 27-28, and 37-39
36. ECA, Report to the Sixth Meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Social Affairs on the Evaluation of Experiences in Integrated Rural Development in Selected African Countries (ECA/SDA/IRD/89/1.1(i), Addis Ababa, 1989, pp. 32-37
37. See publications which have been mentioned in footnotes 33-35

38. ECA, African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP), Addis Ababa, 1989, P.7
39. The Conference came up with an African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation (Arusha, 1990). The very fact such a conference had to be organized and a charter adopted by it bears out the statement made in ECA's AAF-SAP regarding "the pervasive lack of democracy" in Africa and the urgent need to correct the situation
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EVALUATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES
OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM
IN THREE AFRICAN LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES^{1/}

Introduction

Rural development activities have been a major concern of the United Nations System since the early 1960s. As of 1974 the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) has initiated an effort intended to lead to better co-ordinated and effective rural development assistance programmes, through the mechanism of the ACC Task Force on Rural Development. The Task Force held its first meeting in 1976 with the participation of all United Nations organizations concerned. At this meeting the Task Force gave particular attention to the importance of co-ordination at the country level in order to alleviate rural poverty. One of its main United Nations system policy guidelines on rural development is contained in the Declaration of Principles and Programmes of Action adopted by the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) and endorsed by General Assembly resolution 34/14 of 1979. This resolution calls upon the United Nations system to assist Government in a broad range of activities for the benefit of rural people.

The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of the United Nations carried out an evaluation of the relevance and coherence of United Nations system rural development efforts with the underlying aim of improving their effectiveness. In order to narrow the study to a manageable size three African least developed countries (LDCs) were selected: Burkina Faso, Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania, which are somewhat representative of three distinct cultural, linguistic and geographical areas. And twentyfive projects in these three countries were evaluated by JIU.

^{1/} This is an edited version only of the conclusions and recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations' Evaluation of Rural Development Activities of the United Nations System in three African Least Developed Countries (JIU/REP/89/92), Geneva, 1989.

Different organizations have different definitions of rural development. JIU adopted the following definition of rural development for the purpose of its evaluation: the activities, which are "aimed at meeting the needs of either all the rural population or the specific basic needs of its poorest segments, i.e.: the landless labourers, sharecroppers, small-holders and the rural jobless, as well as special target groups such as women and youths. Broadly speaking, such activities at the grass-roots level comprise projects dealing with irrigation, assistance and credit for small farmers and co-operatives, livestock and forestry development, sanitation, nutrition improvement, basic education and primary health care, etc."

SECTION I: CONCLUSIONS

The JIU undertook this exercise with the hope that its findings may be of a more general validity and the lessons learnt during the course of the study may be sufficient to contribute to the on-going process of reflection on the effectiveness of the United Nations system's operational activities for development in general and technical co-operation activities in particular.

On the basis of its findings, JIU arrived at the following conclusions:

Rural development and socio-economic change at the grassroots level are painstakingly slow processes; the introduction of elements of change, which often modify delicate social situations or equilibria, is not without risk for all concerned: much can go wrong, whatever the good intentions of the parties involved.

The inadequately thought out or improperly executed technical co-operation projects may have perverse effects and/or create additional dependency. The several examples of such projects which are mentioned in the report reinforce similar findings reached by other recent and less recent studies. The question, therefore, arises: hasn't the time come to do something about this situation? Shouldn't some kind of a reform of the "project aid" mechanisms at the grassroots level be considered?

More precisely, given that a significant proportion of United Nations system rural development activities seem to go awry, a number of practical steps should be taken. A first step would be for United Nations organizations involved in rural development to determine with some precision who the beneficiaries of the rural development activities they support should be. These need not necessarily be in all cases the "poorest of the poor" or other under-privileged groups (there may be good reasons for helping the middle level farmers, e.g. for the sake of increased employment or export opportunities). But if it is the policy of an organization to devote a significant portion of its technical co-operation package to the grassroots level, some questioning of conventional wisdom seems to be required in order to determine to what extent this is actually taking place and to what extent assistance is being misdirected or siphoned off for the benefit of groups which may be efficient partners but not the most needy. A simple way of doing this would be to clearly state in all project documents who will win and who will lose from the proposed activity, not only in economic, but also in social terms and in terms of relationships between the main actors at the local level. Hopefully, this would at least reduce the risks of raising false expectations.

If there is a strong policy commitment of United Nations system organizations to devoting at least some resources to meeting the needs of the poorest segment of the population, the institutional consequences of a firm policy in this direction need to be considered. The technical co-operation project may be a practical tool for "turnkey" activities or institution building projects, but the evidence in this report, and elsewhere, would seem to show that it is not suitable for fostering participation at the grassroots level. The traditional top-down project (expert + equipment) rarely works effectively in this context. Various instances of technical co-operation projects not really suited for the grassroots level have been recorded in this report. Conversely, the few truly successful grassroots activities that were identified were not projects of the traditional mould. These were more like programmes or even "movements" in which local people and structures were being set in motion with little or no direct involvement of external expatriate

expertise in implementation. It is no great discovery that projects or activities that are deeply rooted in local realities and that correspond to the values and aspirations of the beneficiaries - and are therefore "illuminated from within" - give better results, if not immediately certainly in the long-term, than projects parachuted from above. What is troubling is that, according to the evidence presented in this report, there are so few of such successful projects implemented under the auspices of the United Nations system. What is even more troubling is the fact that United Nations system organizations are not systematically advocating such projects, especially if it can be proven that in the long run they contribute more to local and national self-reliance than the traditional top-down approach.

It would appear, therefore, that the validity of the "project approach" for rural development activities aimed at the poorest of the poor or at the grassroots level needs to be seriously called into question. Resistance from interested parties both in the donor and recipient aid bureaucracies will in all likelihood be strong in any attempt to radically modify the present well-oiled machinery, but at least the recognition of the perverse effects of project aid, seen from the perspective of grassroots rural development should help in putting the problem on the table. In summary form, project aid:

- responds to a logic in which there is a pressure to "get things going" and consequently to spend too much too fast (and to expect too much too soon);

- encourages ambitious drafting of project documents, i.e. because of competition among donors for "good" projects; this in turn leads to unrealistic expectations;

- often leads to institutional destructuring at the receiving end, especially in LDCs where the absorption capacity of governments is weak and the number of projects and of competing donors is high;

- is likely to create dependency in many ways, not least because of the expert-counterpart relationship which does not necessarily encourage the "transfer of responsibility" even where the transfer of knowledge may take place;

- tends to concentrate on the provision of inputs and production of outputs and to neglect what will happen after the end of the project and does not put a bonus on building into new projects the lessons learnt from the mistakes of the past.

SECTION II: RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these conclusions, JIU made the following recommendations:

A. Recommendations for the long term

Recommendation 1

Policy. United Nations system organizations involved in rural development activities should reconsider whether their policy with respect to rural development requires clarification or modification. In particular they should consider whether the beneficiaries of their rural development activities should be better defined (i.e. whether more emphasis at the policy level should be put on activities targeted to the poorest of the poor or to specific underprivileged groups).

Recommendation 2

Policy. In recognition of the fact that helping the poor to help themselves entails a different philosophy and approach from habitual "top down" activities, rural development activities at the grassroots level should be clearly differentiated from normal or traditional technical co-operation activities. Special sets of policy directives and operational procedures applicable to rural development activities should be developed in each agency and through the ACC task force on rural development, bearing in mind the need to keep operational arrangements as decentralized, simple,

and flexible as possible. All concerned organizations should also consider whether the project approach is still valid for grassroots rural development activities.

Recommendation 3

Alternatives to the project approach for rural development

Following the proposals for possible alternatives to the project approach.

(a) Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). If national and international agencies are not really suitable for organizing or encouraging rural development, more funds could be channelled through NGOs. Generally speaking, NGOs are more flexible and better suited to effective work in the field, and some organizations in the United Nations system have already used their services for tasks they themselves cannot perform (UNICEF, UNHCR, FAO and ILO, in particular). It is true that they often provide better value for money. One idea, therefore, would be to develop the NGO approach more systematically, taking care not to view it as a panacea, for there are NGOs and NGOs. Some incline to top-heavy bureaucracy, whereas others (or the same ones) are no different in their approach, which may also be "top-down", from multilateral or bilateral aid agencies. For example, on the basis of an agreement between the Government and the United Nations system agency concerned, NGOs could be assigned the task of carrying out activities or projects directly at grass-roots community or village level and the funding could be gradually increased in terms of the results achieved.

(b) The UNICEF/WFP approach. Both of these organizations manage "to carry out" some rural development and even grass-roots rural development activities, with very little technical co-operation in the usual sense of the term. WFP projects are mainly implemented by the Government, although WFP staff, once the project agreement is signed, play an important role in monitoring and evaluation. UNICEF's operational methods are more complex and diversified, but the features they share with those of WFP

are decentralization and initiative left up to programme managers in the field, along with some flexibility in the programming and reprogramming of activities which are usually, but not always, designed to make the national and local authorities, and especially the beneficiaries themselves, increasingly responsible in implementation.

(c) United Nations system organizations could also make a more direct contribution to progressive support to grass-roots organizations or groupings. This would entail adjustments in present programming systems, essentially for greater flexibility and for the disbursement of funds not on the basis of projects rigidly designed in advance but on the basis of framework agreements, negotiated directly either with the organizations or groups of actual beneficiaries or with the established local authorities (district councils, elected village authorities, village co-operatives groups, and so on). The general philosophy underlying this approach would be maximum decentralization so as to cut the number of intermediaries down to a minimum, and the identification on the basis of the local conditions of the type of partner (for example, co-operative, peasant group or womens' group) in the best position to profit from an outside input. These framework agreements with local groups should obviously stem from a general agreement between the Government concerned and the competent United Nations system organizations. This type of approach could be tested in two or three volunteer countries before bringing it into general use later. A "Rural Development Coordinating Committee" could be set up in each country, comprising government representatives, the main organizations of the United Nations system, bilateral donors and NGOs involved in RD. The Coordinating Committee would refine the procedures of such an approach, identify the areas and sectors in which it could be tried out and provide the follow-up. The Inspectors suggest that, at the field level, small operational interdisciplinary teams representing the main agencies concerned should be formed. Such teams should analyse and understand the situation before trying to change it, and identify dynamic groups and institutional, cultural and other bottlenecks. They should have flexible budgets which do not require them to disburse the money in accordance with too precise or too rapid a schedule but enable them to adjust interventions in terms of the ability of grass-roots

communities or organizations to incorporate outside inputs into their own strategies.

(i) The general philosophy should be to move progressively away from the top-down, blueprint, supply approach towards a more decentralized, flexible, participating, learning process, demand approach. Alternatives (a) and (b), outlined above, should be applied where possible by United Nations system organizations; alternative (c) should be tested on an experimental basis in a number of developing countries. Such experiments should be carefully evaluated. The ACC task force on rural development should undertake a study to determine the scope for generalization of this new approach.

(ii) In order to improve co-ordination of rural development activities at the field level, the governments concerned and the organizations participating in rural development should take the initiative of setting up a "Rural Development Co-ordinating Committee" in which the Government, the multilateral agencies, the main bi-lateral operational agencies and non-governmental organizations would be represented. The main tasks of this committee would be to review governments and donor agency policies and priorities relating to rural development, decide on priority sectors and geographical areas for intervention, avoid overlap and ensure cross-fertilization of activities.

Recommendation 4

The grant element in the project approach often has de-mobilizing effects for popular participation. It is therefore recommended that more experience be gained with rural development activities which involve at least a partial financial commitment of beneficiaries (e.g. loans, credit schemes, revolving funds) in addition to contributions in kind. Amounts accrued through such activities should be used as seed money for new activities.

Recommendation 5

New professionals

The eventual implementation of recommendations 3 and 4 would require probably less expatriate personnel but also a new type of professional with a multidisciplinary rather than compartmentalized technical specialization. Appropriate recruitment procedures and training packages will have to be defined.

B. Specific recommendations for immediate consideration

Recommendation 6

Project documents

(i) All project documents for rural development activities should contain specific information on beneficiaries and on who will gain and who will lose from the project. The possible effects of the project on local social stratification should also be assessed in the project document.

(ii) Project documents should clearly outline the turnover strategy i.e. what will happen at the end of the project, who will cover running and maintenance costs, whether funds will be generated locally from government sources or through continuing external assistance. The involvement of the beneficiary community in the turnover process - when possible through locally-generated funds or through contributions in kind - should specifically be provided for.

Recommendation 7

Project management units (PMUs) should be avoided; projects should be part of local level community-based on government structures. The creation of locally-based and controlled participating institutions (peasant groups, village co-operatives, youth farms, womens' production groups, etc.) should be more systematically encouraged.

Recommendation 8

While it is recognized that, particularly in LDCs, specialized expatriate personnel continue to be necessary in some projects both for direct project implementation and on-the-job training, it is recommended that expatriates should become the exception rather than the rule in rural development projects. When they are employed they should be "advisers" rather than "directors". More emphasis ought to be placed on recruitment of more rural development multidisciplinary "generalists" rather than specialized technicians who may be less sensitive to the social aspects of rural development. Measures should be taken to avoid ostentatious behaviour by experts.

Recommendation 9

More attention should be given to the smooth integration of the technical and social aspects of projects in order to avoid the establishment of "islands of progress" separated from local realities. Prestige equipment should also be avoided.

Recommendation 10

Realistic planning and implementation

In order to maximise the chances of success of rural development activities, the following measures should be introduced:

(i) The intended beneficiaries should be involved in the identification and planning stages. Their support to project objectives and strategy should be secured before the project is approved. Beneficiaries should be fully involved through the life of the project.

(ii) Planning and implementation procedures should be realistic, flexible and decentralized. Such procedures should allow for:

- more lead time at the beginning of projects to ensure smooth implementation and longer project life spans (in particular longer "phasing out" periods) ;
- continuous re-planning of activities on the basis of successes and constraints and as "the horizon lights up". More decentralized budgetary autonomy should be given to local agency representatives;
- simplified reporting procedures focussing on results rather than on inputs and outputs.

(iii) In order to lighten the administrative burden of the recipient government, decentralization of national project support and monitoring functions from the central to the regional or district levels should be encouraged whenever possible.

Recommendation 11

Evaluation

More ex-post evaluations should be conducted in order to learn more about the impact and sustainability of rural development projects. A provision for ex-post evaluation should be included in project budgets of all large-scale projects. If funding of individual ex-post project evaluations cannot be secured, more thematic evaluations of clusters of similar projects should be conducted.

REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK FROM RURAL PROGRESS READERS

ECA publishes the bi-yearly journal, **RURAL PROGRESS**, to facilitate the dissemination of information and the exchange of experience in integrated rural development in Africa with a view to creating a more informed interest in the concept and to facilitate its acceptance. The journal enjoys wide readership within and outside Africa.

RURAL PROGRESS, as a matter of policy, is deliberately published in a non-technical language as far as possible. It covers issues and/or subjects of topical interest. To make the journal more participatory and to permit the publication of materials based on empirical experiences in planning, implementation and evaluation of rural development programmes in Africa, the Editor welcomes contributions on on-going experiences in the field of integrated rural development from the readers of **RURAL PROGRESS**.

Interested persons and/or institutions in Africa are encouraged to share their experiences and knowledge through **RURAL PROGRESS** on a continuing basis.

RURAL PROGRESS also wishes to establish a network of honorary correspondents in Africa. Each national correspondent is expected to provide materials for consideration by the Editor for publication in **RURAL PROGRESS**. The names of the national correspondents will appear in each issue of the journal. Each correspondent will receive ten complimentary copies of the journal as a token recognition of his/her contribution.

RURAL PROGRESS will be glad to receive offers from individuals and preferably institutions for designation as honorary correspondents. The journal reserves for itself the right to select any particular correspondent without assigning any reason. Those selected to become honorary correspondents will be informed accordingly.

Institutions and individuals wishing to be considered for designation as honorary correspondents are kindly invited to apply in writing, giving full details of their background, qualifications and experience, to the following:

The Editor
RURAL PROGRESS
Joint ECA/FAO Agriculture Division
United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
P.O.Box 3001
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Annex I

One hundred and forty-six countries which attended WCARRD, 1979 by the type of their Governments

Region	No. of countries	Monarchy			Military			Civilian		
		No party	One party	Multi party	No party	One party	Multi party	No party	One party	Multi party
Asia and the Pacific	23	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	9	11
Latin America	26	-	-	-	8	-	-	-	5	13
Near East	18	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	5
Africa	44	2	-	-	3	5	-	1	23	10
Sub-Total	111	9	1	-	12	5	-	1	44	39
Europe and North America	35	-	-	6	-	-	-	1	8	20
Total	146	9	1	6	12	5	-	2	52	59

Source: Compiled by M.A. Zaman from List of Delegates and Observers, World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, Rome, 12-20 July 1979 (WCARRD/INF.9 - Rev. 1)

Annex II

Table showing fifty African States by the form of their
Government, 1986

Monarchy	Civilian		Military			Total
	One party	Multi- party	No party	One party	Multi- party	
4	15	8	5	15	3	50

Source: Compiled by M.A. Zaman, in informal consultation with the Organization of African Unity, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The form of Government keeps on changing rather drastically of which Nigeria, Sudan and Guinea are prime examples. Hence, the figures in this table should be regarded as broad indicators of the trend in the region.

Litho in United Nations, Addis Ababa (UNECA) 090-176 . 1990 . 1550